



May 11, 2015

Transitioning the Valles Caldera National Preserve to the National Park Service

Background: In 2000, the Valles Caldera National Preserve was established by Congress to be managed by the Valles Caldera Trust, a wholly-owned government corporation overseen by a board of seven presidential appointees, the Santa Fe National Forest Supervisor and the Bandelier National Monument Superintendent.

On December 19, 2014, the enactment of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015 (Public Law 113-291), established the Valles Caldera National Preserve as a unit of the National Park System. The legislation called for a period of transitional management by the Valles Caldera Trust, which ends on September 30, 2015.

During the transition, the Trust continues to manage day-to-day Preserve activities, in consultation with the National Park Service (NPS). The NPS has been working closely with the Trust and the US Forest Service to plan for the transition of all administrative and operational responsibilities to the NPS which will also fully implement all management, resource protection, science, visitor access, and other activities as directed by Congress and by federal and state law, regulation, and policy.

Some Important Components of the Law:

- “To protect, preserve, and restore the fish, wildlife, watershed, natural, scientific, scenic, geologic, historic, cultural, archaeological, and recreational values of the area, the Valles Caldera National Preserve is designated as a unit of the National Park System.”
- The Preserve *shall* remain open to public use during the interim management period.
- Within 3 years from when funding is made available, NPS *shall* prepare a management plan for the Preserve.
- Until a management plan is completed, the NPS *may* administer the Preserve in accordance with any management activities or plans currently adopted by the Trust.
- Within 3 years, NPS *shall* study the feasibility of establishing a caldera rim trail.
- NPS *shall* carry out the Trust’s science and education program until one is established through the NPS management plan.
- Grazing of livestock *shall* continue to the extent the use furthers scientific research or interpretation of the ranching history of the Preserve.
- Hunting, fishing, and trapping *shall* be permitted in accordance with federal and state law. Any limitations *shall* be made in consultation with the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish.
- NPS *shall* undertake activities to improve the health of forest, grassland, and riparian areas within the Preserve, including any activities carried out in accordance with the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program.
- Consultation *shall* be conducted with Indian tribes and pueblos, and access *shall* be allowed for traditional cultural and customary uses.
- No roads or buildings, or motorized access *shall* be allowed on volcanic domes and peaks above 9,600 ft. or 250 ft. below the top of the dome, whichever is lower.

Frequently Asked Questions

- **What is the plan for the transition? When will it be complete?**

The NPS will take over all management activities of the Valles Caldera Preserve on October 1, 2015. Until then the Trust staff will continue to manage this site in consultation with the NPS. The NPS, Trust and USFS are working tirelessly to transition the administrative, personnel, financial and operational responsibilities of the Preserve to the NPS and to ensure a seamless transition.

- **What steps have been taken to work with Indian tribes and pueblos that have cultural ties to the Valles Caldera?**

The NPS has met with tribes and pueblos that affiliate themselves with the Preserve, as part of our preparations for the transition. The legislation requires consultation with tribal and pueblo governments and the protection of cultural and religious sites, including the volcanic domes and peaks in the Preserve.

- **How will staffing be impacted by the transition? Will Trust employees also be transitioned into NPS?**

The Preserve is currently being managed by Trust employees, who are overseeing activities this season, similar to past years. The staffing details involved with the management transition are being developed at the highest levels of management including the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

- **Will public access change during the transition?**

The Trust recently announced the expansion of public recreational access beginning May 15. The NPS will utilize existing Trust management plans as it works to develop long-term public access goals for the Preserve.

- **What is the plan for hunting and fishing at the Preserve?**

Hunting and fishing will continue to be allowed on the Preserve under NPS management. Hunters who were selected in the Trust's lottery for this fall's elk hunt will be provided with additional information in a welcome packet that will be distributed by the Trust soon. The NPS is working with the NM Department of Game and Fish to plan for recreational activities in the coming years.

- **Will forest restoration projects continue on the Preserve?**

The law directs the NPS to undertake activities to improve the health of forest, grassland, and riparian areas within the Preserve, including any activities carried out in accordance with the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program. These restoration activities will be contingent on funding availability.

- **How will the Trust's science program change in the future?**

The Trust established a well-respected and robust science and education program to help inform its management decisions and share the scientific findings with the public. The NPS has a long history of science-based management, and the law directs the NPS to carry out the Trust's science and education program until one is established through the NPS management planning process.

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